BILL FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS.

Mr. Ferguson.—At the last meeting of the Council, I obtained permission to introduce this Bill. I now introduce it and move that it be read in Council. The principle of the Bill, I think, is one which will appeal to all of us. The very fact that I have been permitted to introduce this Bill shows that we are all agreed upon the necessity for some measure for the better prevention of cruelty to animals. The only question is how this protection can best be supplied. In many of the larger towns in India, there are legislative enactments to secure this object. In some, power is given by the Municipal Acts and in others, by the Police Regulation; while in others again, it is contained in a special enactment. The last is, I think, by far the most satisfactory arrangement and I have therefore adopted it. The powers given by these special enactments are usually exercised by some public society assisted by public funds. I hope that when this Bill becomes law some such society may be established here and the powers under this Regulation may be exercised by that body.

I will now say a few words about the main provisions of the Bill. You will observe, in the first place, that it is not proposed to put the Regulation in force all at once throughout the whole of Travancore, but only in specified areas as may be thought desirable. It can therefore be tried experimentally and gradually extended, should it be found to work successfully.

There are two kinds of cruelty contemplated by the Bill. First, that due to thoughtlessness. Cases of this description can be easily brought home under section 3 to those who act without knowing what cruelty really consists in. The second class of cruelty consists in the owners of animals trying to derive the utmost profit from them without recognising a reciprocal obligation of kindness towards the dumb creatures. Section 6 of the Bill covers such cases.

Clause 2 of section 6 is very important. In that, provision is made for the establishment of infirmaries for the treatment and cure of animals subjected to cruelty. This ensures that any animal which is pronounced to be cruelly suffering can receive treatment at the hands of a veterinary surgeon. I am aware that this provision is, in some cases, likely to be abused. I know a case in Madras where a driver used his animal cruelly and it was taken to the infirmary for treatment, and when called upon to pay a certain sum for the treatment, he pleaded his inability to pay it and the animal was put up in auction when a friend of the driver purchased it for a nominal price. But such drawbacks as these are more than counterbalanced by the guarantee that every animal produced before a Magistrate and found to be suffering will receive professional treatment. Here in Trivandrum, we have an institution ready at hand and in an excellent condition. I mean the Veterinary Hospital at Chackay, which may very easily be declared an infirmary under the Regulation when it is passed.

Section 7 is intended to prevent cruelty and also the dissemination of infectious diseases.

Section 11 contains a saving clause in respect of religious rites and observances. I am not aware whether there is any sect or tribe in Trivandrum who consider it a merit to kill any animal for a religious purpose. But there may be such in other parts of the country and hence it is necessary to have the saving clause.

I do not think the other sections call for any remark as they are self-explanatory. I now leave the Bill in your hands and trust you will see your way to affirming its principle. It is time that something should be done for our dumb dependents, for as our good Queen, the late Queen Empress, once most forcibly remarked "no civilisation is complete unless it includes the dumb and defenceless of god's creatures within the sphere of charity and mercy."

The Council having affirmed the principle of the Bill, Mr. Ferguson moved that the Bill be referred to a Select Committee consisting of Messrs. Kunhiraman Nair, Padmanabha Menon and the Mover, to report within three months.

Seconded by Mr. Nagam Aiya.

Carried.

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